United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General begins official visit to India, having concluded stay in Pakistan; expresses thanks for Indian support for United Nations peace-keeping operations.

- Special Rapporteur on human rights in former Yugoslavia expresses concern at massive forced displacements of people by Bosnian Serb forces; demands immediate end to expulsions and related activities.

- Robert Dillon begins 10-day mission to Rwanda and neighbouring countries to promote more vigorous regional approach to crisis.

- Member States owe United Nations $3.3 billion as of 31 August; United States pays $335 million in peace-keeping dues in September.

- International Conference on Population and Development continues discussion of national experiences with population policies.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today began an official visit to India, having concluded his stay in Pakistan. He was received at New Delhi airport by Foreign Secretary K. Srinivasan; Environment Minister Kamal Nath; India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, M.H. Ansari; the United Nations Resident Coordinator, Hans von Sponeck; and Special Adviser Chinmaya Gharekhan.

Speaking briefly at the airport, the Secretary-General emphasized India's support for United Nations objectives in the political and development fields, and expressed thanks for its contributions to peace-keeping operations.

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The Special Rapporteur on human rights in the former Yugoslavia, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, has expressed grave concern at massive forced displacements of people by Bosnian Serb forces. Expulsions of non-Serbs from areas such as Bijeljina and Banja Luka have recently intensified, he said.

In the last seven weeks, 7,000 people had been forcibly moved or had left the areas in question because of fears for their safety, according to the Special Rapporteur. Furthermore, there were reliable reports of physical abuse, extortion of money and theft of possessions in areas controlled by the Bosnian Serb forces. He insisted that the de facto Bosnian Serb authorities bring an end to the expulsions and related activities immediately.

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Following the Secretary-General's decision to pursue a more vigorous regional approach to the Rwandan crisis and its effects on neighbouring countries, Mr. Robert Sherwood Dillon will begin a mission to the region tonight, according to a United Nations spokesman. Mr. Dillon will spend ten days consulting with all concerned and identify measures to strengthen the coordination of United Nations efforts there. He will then return to Headquarters and report to the Secretary-General.

Meanwhile, the spokesman said, refugees have been returning to Rwanda in increasing numbers. He described that development as very positive. A total of 360,000 refugees had returned in the last three or four weeks, including 100,000 recent arrivals from the Goma area.

Reports that former government forces were returning to the southwestern zone to launch guerrilla operations were greatly exaggerated, the spokesman went on to say. A small number of lightly armed troops had crossed the border, but the situation was not serious. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) had established control in the zone and efforts would be made to disarm returning troops. In addition, Special Representative Shahryar Khan would be travelling to Zaire and Tanzania to discuss the separation of former military elements from refugees.

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As of 31 August, Member States owed the United Nations a total of $3.3 billion, according to the latest update on the Organization's financial situation. Of that amount, $830 million was for assessments for the regular budget and $2.42 billion was for peace-keeping operations. However, the update did not reflect a payment of $335 million made by the United States to the peace-keeping account on 1 September.

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The First Lady of Ghana, Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings, yesterday told the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo that Africa as a whole was not overpopulated, but that large migrations had put tremendous pressure on parts of the continent. She called for an objective re-evaluation

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of the premium placed on national borders: "Ghana's vision of African unity has always emphasized the limitations of unnatural borders -- whilst stressing the virtues of an organic whole."

The President of the Central Statistical Office of Hungary noted that the populations of many European countries were shrinking and ageing. The interests of less developed countries would be served only if socio-economic difficulties arising from demographic trends in developed countries were reduced, he said. Slovenia's Minister for Labour, Family and Social Affairs stated that a fertility rate of 1.31 meant an ageing population in her country. In addition, immigration had halted, which was another serious demographic problem.

Bangladesh offered to share lessons learned from its population programmes with other countries, especially those of the South. Such an exchange could be the beginning of a South-South partnership, which would need the generous support of the countries of the North.

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